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Security Council

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Provisional

5188th meeting

Friday, 27 May 2005, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Møller/Ms. Løj	(Denmark)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. El Hadj Ali
	Argentina	Mr. García Moritán
	Benin	Mr. Babadoudou
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Kitaoka
	Philippines	Mr. Mercado
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Mr. Holliday

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2005/335)

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05-36219 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2005/335)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Albania, Luxembourg, Serbia and Montenegro, Switzerland and Ukraine, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Nebojsa Covic, President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, and invite him to take a seat at the Council table.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Covic (President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Jessen-Petersen to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them documents S/2005/335 and Corrigendum 1, which contain the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. I should also like to call the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2005/329, which contains a letter dated 18 May 2005 from the representative of Serbia and Montenegro addressed to the President of the Security Council.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give him the floor.

Mr. Jessen-Petersen: Let me begin, Sir, by congratulating you as the President of the Council. You will appreciate my particular pleasure in seeing Denmark in the chair today. I also want to thank you personally for honouring us with your presence in the Chamber today.

The three-month period since my last appearance before the Security Council has been a challenging one. The progress made — and let there be no doubt that there has been progress — must be seen in the context of the challenges that Kosovo has faced.

In particular, March 2005 saw some very difficult moments. The Government that was formed in December 2004 made good progress through its first 100 days, and the momentum was considerable. However, in early March, a few days after my last report to this Council, that Government came to an end when Prime Minister Haradinaj resigned following notification of an imminent indictment from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Within 24 hours following his indictment, and after appealing for calm and for a continuation of progress in building a democratic society in Kosovo, Mr. Haradinaj proceeded voluntarily to The Hague.

During those days, Kosovo showed the region and the world commendable respect for the judicial process. Democracy was respected, and a new Government, continuing the coalition of the two parties — the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) — and under the leadership of Bajram Kosumi as Prime Minister, was formed within three weeks. Throughout those difficult days and weeks, the political leaders and citizens of Kosovo managed a highly unusual situation with maturity and without any disorder or instability.

In particular, standards implementation stayed on track. The brief delay around the time of the formation of the Government was quickly overcome. The new Government showed the same commitment to moving forward on standards and made continued progress on its programme during the months of April and May.

As in most new democracies — and let us remember that democracy in Kosovo is only a few years old — there is political tension. For the first time in its recent history, Kosovo has a strong opposition, under the leadership of Hashim Thaci and Veton Surroi, which, as everywhere, is critical of the work of the Government, while in agreement on the overall goals for Kosovo.

In order to manage any tensions more constructively, and in view of the critical period ahead for Kosovo and the significant political issues coming up, I decided to propose bringing political party leaders and the President of Kosovo together in a forum. The purpose of this forum is to enhance constructive dialogue and ensure maximum possible consensus on critical and crucial issues, without substituting for constitutional forums. My proposal was met with agreement, and I will convene the first meeting of the Kosovo Forum next week.

I am glad to report some positive developments on dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. The first direct dialogue meetings since March 2004 resumed one year later, beginning with the Working Group on Missing Persons on 16 March.

That was followed by meetings in April and May on the key issues of energy and returns of displaced persons. These Working Group meetings will take place on a regular basis in Belgrade and Pristina, and they are supported by intermediate technical meetings to work on substantive issues. This dialogue not only serves to make progress on the specific issues, which range from humanitarian to economic, but it is also an important sign of building confidence, which is crucial as we move closer towards status discussions.

We need to continue encouraging political dialogue. I welcome the fact that Pristina and Belgrade have now expressed their readiness to engage in high-level political dialogue. It is vital that political leaders begin to talk with each other sooner rather than later. Pristina and Belgrade have every mutual interest in coexisting and interacting peacefully and constructively.

Over the past months we have witnessed greater engagement and dialogue with the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Church and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo signed a memorandum of understanding on 25 March to allow for the reconstruction of Serbian Orthodox religious sites. That followed a lengthy delay due to talks within the Church on how to proceed. The Provisional Institutions had already allocated €4.2 million last year and are now actively considering earmarking an additional €1.5 million for reconstruction of Serbian Orthodox religious sites that were damaged during the March 2004 violence.

It is obvious that long-term preservation of cultural heritage in Kosovo, which includes Serbian Orthodox, Ottoman/Islamic, Catholic and vernacular sites, must become an increasing priority in the coming months. In this context, I would like to mention the successful international donors conference for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage of all communities in Kosovo, held two weeks ago in the UNESCO headquarters in Paris with the support of that organization, the European Union, the Council of Europe and others. Participants pledged some €10 million and technical assistance in a clear expression of support for the cultural heritage in Kosovo. A technical mission to restore a church in Prizren, supported by UNESCO, took place just a few weeks ago, and more will now follow.

However, the news is not all good. Despite recent encouraging developments on dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, I am concerned that, after more than 15 months, there is still no clear signal from Belgrade to the Kosovo Serbs to participate in the institutions. Dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, although welcome and important, cannot substitute for

the direct involvement of the Kosovo Serbs in shaping their own future in an internal dialogue in Kosovo.

Progress in Kosovo will continue even without the meaningful participation of the Kosovo Serbs, but progress in establishing a fully multi-ethnic Kosovo and integrating all communities will remain limited as long as one ethnic group is pressured to stay outside the political, economic and social processes. The fault for this obstacle to progress does not lie with Pristina. The victims, however, are the Kosovo Serbs who are eager to participate at this crucial moment. Those who oppose progress can always find some reason to defer allowing participation, but recent trends have proven that bolder engagement can actually foster real progress for the benefit of all. In my view, Belgrade would help the Kosovo Serb community and itself by moving from reticence and delay to commitment and engagement in that area.

Standards implementation remains the road map for the short term but also for the long term. It is a way of building and strengthening democracy and a multi-ethnic society, and it is also a way for Kosovo to move progressively towards European integration.

We have seen a continued strong commitment by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government during the reporting period. The structures working on standards implementation have shown themselves to be solid and durable. While we recognize that there is still much to do, the trends in a number of areas have been positive, and that is reflected in my technical assessment (S/2005/335, annex I). We feel that the authorities, and increasingly the citizens, have understood the need to implement standards and have made efforts to reach out to the minorities.

Let me say a few words on some specific issues.

Decentralization, or local government reform, is not a standard as such, but it is an important process. Decentralization will benefit the population as a whole. It will bring services closer to the citizens, and it will also help meet minority concerns.

After some hesitation following its formation, the Government has acted. A steering board and five working groups have been established and are convening, including two meetings held this week, on legislation and on pilot projects which are to be established shortly. The Kosovo Serbs were invited to, and participated in, those meetings, and thus had the opportunity to shape the process. I would also add that Belgrade was invited to join the Kosovo Serb delegation and that we were, of course, flexible on the modalities. But Belgrade again failed to respond. Regrettably, the post of Deputy Minister for Local Government Administration, reserved for a Kosovo Serb, still remains vacant.

As we push for further progress on decentralization, I believe that the recent Contact Group agreement on the principle of "no partition of Kosovo" sends a clear signal that the majority community has no reason to fear that meaningful decentralization would be a cover for the division of Kosovo. On the contrary, if well conceived and implemented, it should eventually promote coexistence around the efficient sharing of local capacities and resources.

I would add that we are currently looking at a number of initiatives that could be carried out prior to full-scale decentralization and that could empower municipalities, for example, in the field of policing and the administration of justice.

Security has further improved, and this is key as it is a basis for progress in all areas. I want to pay tribute again to the Commander of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and his forces, whose excellent work and close coordination with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) is playing a key role in maintaining a safe and secure environment in Kosovo.

The environment has indeed been generally calm during the reporting period, with only a few incidents of note. In particular, very little occurred in the way of inter-ethnic incidents. Unfortunately, the Commander of KFOR and I are concerned — and we have repeatedly said so — that, partly due to deliberate misinformation, the perception of security remains a problem and leads to mainly self-imposed limits on freedom of movement. There is a tendency in some media to generalize and misrepresent every incident involving Kosovo Serbs. Before a police investigation has even begun, some journalists, and some politicians, pronounce an event to be ethnically motivated, thus feeding the fears of the Kosovo Serb community, including internally displaced persons. In most cases we find after thorough professional investigations that such assertions have no foundation.

There are also assertions that perpetrators are not sentenced. That, too, is simply misinformation. As a recent example, six Kosovo Albanians were found guilty of the murder of two Kosovo Serbs in March 2004 and were sentenced to a total of 38 years by the Gnjilane District Court just last week. It is also worth noting that in recent meetings with senior UNMIK officials, Serbian cabinet ministers have indicated that the Kosovo Serb population's trust in the Kosovo Police Service has indeed increased. As the Council may be aware, the KPS has a minority component of approximately 16 per cent, and Kosovo Serbs make up approximately 10 per cent of the KPS. I might add another example of progress: of 29 lay judges sworn in at the end of April, 16 were minority community members, of which 13 were Kosovo Serbs.

There are signs, and evidence, of increased freedom of movement by Kosovo Serbs, although there are still too many who do not feel free to move. A sign of the improving environment is the reduction of escorts and of the military and police presence at specific sites and locations. To give a recent example, at the beginning of this month, the first Serbian play to be performed since the end of the conflict was presented at Kosovo's main theatre in Pristina; it was prepared and performed by Serbs, with a large Serb attendance.

The number of returns of displaced persons is still disappointingly low. The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, UNMIK and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continue to work hard on improving conditions for returns so that displaced persons can return to Kosovo if they so choose. I recently met with displaced persons in Serbia and with returnees in Kosovo, and I can report to the Council that their main concern is no longer primarily security. Rather, they are concerned about property issues and the lack of economic prospects.

There has been some qualitative progress in returns. For example, we have the first urban return to the town of Klina. My visits to returnees in several areas, including Bablyak and Brestovik, have convinced me that conditions exist to allow tomorrow's returns to take place and that positive encouragement by responsible politicians, in both Pristina and Belgrade, can convince more displaced persons to return to Kosovo.

There have been increased efforts on returns on the part of the Kosovo Government. That includes personal appeals by the Prime Minister to potential returnees and visits to Podgorica and to Skopje by the Minister of Returns — himself a Serb — and the Minister of Local Government Administration. Those visits have resulted in better understanding and improved regional cooperation, as well as in agreements with regional partners, as for example a recent protocol on returns with Montenegro. The Working Group on Returns, held on 12 May between Pristina and Belgrade under the chairmanship of UNHCR, was a successful first meeting and will continue. In a very positive development, the respective heads of delegations from Pristina and Belgrade met in Pristina to discuss issues of substance in a productive bilateral working meeting just a couple of days ago.

As regards functioning democratic institutions, I can report that the rapid formation of the new Government in March showed continued evidence of a stable political situation. The Assembly of Kosovo has lately shown itself to be a more transparent and democratic place for debate according to the established rules. The recent debate on decentralization, held five or six days ago, was clearly a step forward. I and colleagues from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe will continue to provide assistance and advice to the Assembly presidency to ensure that that key institution functions democratically, as I trust it will.

We are rigorously stressing the need for local ownership, and the policy of transfer of competences to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government has continued. We are at this point carefully looking at transfer in police and justice areas, where we can transfer competencies short of sovereignty in order to ensure that the local authorities assume maximum responsibility and accountability, also in the area of security.

We have continued to support the efforts of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to coordinate and strengthen institutional capacity-building. The Prime Minister has given full political backing to an initiative of the Provisional Institutions, supported by UNMIK and the international community, to draw up a strategic plan in order to guide assistance and help focus on priorities. It is expected that the strategic plan will be developed by the summer and

will serve as a basis for better targeting and coordinating donor efforts, so that we can build up the institutions that Kosovo needs. It is clear that considerable donor assistance will be necessary in a number of sectors over the coming months and years.

On accountability, the policy we developed has served as an incitement to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to address accountability problems and take corrective measures where necessary. UNMIK is prepared to take action if and when appropriate, but counts on the Provisional Institutions to assume their responsibilities directly.

There have been some significant developments on economic issues that have helped, to some extent, to improve the investment climate, including in the areas of privatization, access to loans from the European Investment Bank, and long-term lease possibilities for investors. However, I must stress that the extremely problematic economic conditions could at any moment lead to social instability, as they would in any society with high unemployment and continued stagnation. In spite of our efforts to make the investment climate more attractive and to stimulate the economy, it is clear that there will be no real progress until the status issue is resolved.

In conclusion, let me stress again that, according to realistic and fact-based criteria, Kosovo has seen steady further improvement during the reporting period. At the same time, the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government know that much still needs to be done in key standards areas, and we are pursuing the shortcomings on a daily basis.

We must, however, recognize that the pace of further progress on standards implementation is reliant on several factors. First, it depends on the willingness of the majority community to continue to make efforts to create a multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo. That willingness does exist, despite the recent painful conflict, and we must and will continue to support those who display that willingness. Secondly, the degree of Kosovo Serb participation will influence the extent to which their interests are reflected in the ongoing standards implementation. Here, as we have urged repeatedly, Belgrade must give a clear, positive signal. Thirdly, status resolution and the ensuing certainty will mean that we can make faster and more substantial progress on a range of issues.

I want to be very frank: with a resolution of the status issue, and therefore an end to the uncertainty, I am confident that we will see much more significant results on issues such as returns, freedom of movement and the economy. Status resolution will also have clear regional benefits, including for regional dialogue and trade. There are clearly limits to the results on regional integration that can be achieved without having certainty on status. Leaving it pending will delay regional integration and adversely affect the interests of all, including Belgrade, Podgorica, Skopje and Tirana. In my meetings with regional partners, the interest in seeing status resolution is strong.

We are all working towards the same ultimate goal: stabilizing the region and the pursuit of the European perspective. European integration is vital for Kosovo and for the region. It will serve, as it has elsewhere, to break down borders and ensure greater prosperity for everybody.

As Council members will have seen in his report, the Secretary-General believes that a comprehensive review of standards should be initiated this summer. That comprehensive review can, inter alia, draw on existing structures and working groups in Pristina to support its work on reviewing the standards, and all interested parties will no doubt have a chance to make their voices heard.

I am confident that progress will continue in the interest of all communities in Kosovo, based on a forward-looking, constructive and honest approach by all concerned. The role of the Security Council in moving Kosovo from a holding operation to a sustainable and lasting solution is crucial, and I thank its members for their support.

The President: I thank Mr. Jessen-Petersen for his briefing of the Security Council.

I shall now give the floor to Mr. Nebojsa Covic, President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

Mr. Covic (Serbia and Montenegro) (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): It is my special pleasure to greet the members of the Security Council on behalf of the Council of Ministers of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro and on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, and to express my pleasure at having this opportunity

to participate in today's meeting on Kosovo and Metohija. I also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report.

We have just heard yet another technical briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General regarding the situation in Kosovo and Metohija. Every opportunity we have to inform the international community about the extremely difficult position of the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities in the province is extremely important to us. Today's meeting, however, is of special significance. That is because, if talks on the future status are to begin on the basis of the report and the recommendations of the Secretary-General for launching a comprehensive review of the standards implementation, we have to have concrete and not imaginary progress in Kosovo and Metohija.

Let us go back, for a moment, to the Security Council meeting in February and to the technical report presented on that occasion. I would like to remind the Security Council that the aforesaid report commented critically on and indicated the absence of results in achieving standards, particularly in the area of respect for the rights of the non-Albanian communities. However, the report before us today notes significant progress and implies that the prescribed standards have been met or are in the final phase of being met. Such progress, had it really been made in such a short period of time, would no doubt be an amazing feat. Alas, the reality in Kosovo and Metohija is quite different.

Regrettably, the briefing we heard today links the most important problems to the Kosovo and Metohija Serbs and to the Government of the Republic of Serbia and its authorities. In view of the fact that Serbs and other non-Albanians live isolated in enclaves precisely because their safety is jeopardized and there is no freedom of movement, the statement that freedom of movement exists in all municipalities in the province, except in the northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica, is inaccurate. Allow me to remind the Council that the seat of the District Court is in the northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica, and that the President of the Court and all other employees are members of the Albanian national community. They come to work every day with no problem whatsoever, and we sincerely hope that the same level of freedom of movement will soon be achieved for minority communities in all other parts of Kosovo and Metohija.

The report should not have omitted mention of the fact that there are still 230,000 internally displaced Serbs and other non-Albanians who cannot return to their homes — not because they do not want to, but because the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and KFOR cannot guarantee their safety and freedom of movement. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in the past six years around 12,000 internally displaced persons have returned, 5,000 of whom are Serbs. However, despite the officially proclaimed support for returns that was expressed on several occasions, one more so-called year of returns is passing, and there are no results.

Most of the activities of potential returnees more or less boil down to visits to their demolished, burned-down homes and desecrated graveyards. We sincerely hope that this year we will witness a transformation and that the representatives of UNMIK and of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government will agree to sign, with us, a protocol on organized returns which would break the deadlock, initiate the process and make it more efficient. That would entail more energetic measures regarding the eviction of those who, threatening violence, are illegally using Serbian property. Further, it should be kept in mind that, of the 27,000 court decisions that have been handed down in the last six years on the restitution of usurped property to its rightful owners, only 300 have actually been carried out.

The report should also have included data on 150 demolished, burned-down Serbian churches and monasteries, 60 of which, being sites of the highest importance, enjoy a high level of protection. While these holy sites await reconstruction, they are quietly being taken apart, brick by brick, and any trace of their existence is being destroyed.

The report does not mention the fact that the Assembly and the Government of Kosovo and Metohija are not truly multi-ethnic, since no protection is provided for non-Albanian communities against outvoting. Kosovo and Metohija Serbs participate in those institutions in which they stand a chance of achieving goals related to their vital interests, particularly in those municipalities in which they won the last local elections. Nor does the report make mention of the illegal privatization of Serbian property, which continues in the absence of any strategy for an economic recovery or for finding solutions to the

problem of high unemployment. The report does not reflect sufficiently on the problem of organized crime — a problem that even Albanian parliamentary parties point out as an evil that permeates all segments of life in the province.

I believe that the Council will agree that reports should not be written to satisfy only one side. But, leaving aside embellished reports on the "virtual reality" of Kosovo and Metohija, I would like to use this opportunity to point out yet another worrisome aspect of the activities of the United Nations administration in the province, which has a mandate to implement resolution 1244 (1999) impartially. Unfortunately, the steps that were taken recently considerably jeopardize the credibility not only of UNMIK but of the United Nations as a whole and call into question the impartiality of the role they should play in future processes. By making a politically sensitive request to obtain a special international dialling code, a special international code for Pristina airport, and through international visits by representatives of the Provisional Institutions without the presence of UNMIK officials and other similar initiatives, creating the impression internationally that Kosovo and Metohija is a completely separate entity, the interests and requests of only one community living in the province are being catered to, thus severely violating resolution 1244 (1999) and prejudging the future status of the province.

The most recent initiative regarding the establishment of the Kosovo Forum, meant to consolidate the Kosovo and Metohija Albanian leadership and to provide a framework within which they should prepare themselves for negotiations on future status, speaks volumes in favour of my claim. I would like to remind the Council that UNMIK is not present in the province to cater to the objectives and interests of one community only, regardless of the size of that particular community and regardless of the possible consequences of that community's dissatisfaction if its one-sided requests are not met.

It is only human to want to show the success that has been achieved, and I can understand that. Likewise, I can understand the need of the international community to direct its attention and resources to other hotbeds of tension around the world. However, I will reiterate once again that by writing embellished reports that serve to satisfy those needs, a poor compromise is made for the Albanian majority. This will not be conducive to achieving a modern, democratic, multi-ethnic society — something we defined at the very beginning as our common objective.

We therefore welcome the balanced approach that the Secretary-General has taken in his political assessment and recommendations.

As always, the authorities in Belgrade are trying to facilitate the process of achieving this common goal of ours by adopting a constructive approach, and we stand united in our view that working towards a truly democratic and multi-ethnic society is the only path to follow. At this point, however, I would like to stress the cornerstone of the State policy of Belgrade: that State borders cannot be changed, and that, in the process of finding a solution to the future status of Kosovo and Metohija, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro cannot be questioned.

We are ready to seek, in cooperation with all international actors and through direct dialogue with Pristina, a peaceful, comprehensive and permanent solution to the Kosovo and Metohija problem, which includes the full implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). The President and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia have extended invitations to both the President and the Prime Minister of Kosovo and Metohija for a direct dialogue.

Although there has been no positive reply from Pristina, the invitation to a sincere dialogue, without any conditions, stands. It should focus on the very heart of the problem, because we believe that a direct dialogue is the only option if solutions are to be found to the problems faced by our citizens living in the province. We hope that the leaders of the Kosovo and Metohija Albanians will in this case, too, demonstrate a growing political awareness and readiness for dialogue. As we announced at the last meeting, we have reactivated the Working Group on missing and kidnapped persons, the Working Group on returns and the Working Group on energy, as agreed during the Vienna process, while the reactivation of the Working Group for transportation and communications is expected in the next few weeks.

We are currently defining modalities for participation in the work of the working group on decentralization — a working group we consider to be the most important indicator of the multi-ethnic character of the Provisional Institutions of Self-

Government. We have also proposed the establishment of two more working groups for technical dialogue, a working group for privatization and a working group for environmental protection, but we have not yet received a reply.

During all the discussions we have had recently with representatives of the international community regarding the pace of the process of finding a solution to the Kosovo and Metohija problems, we have been reassured that no automatism will be applied in this process and that concrete results in achieving our common objective have to precede every new step. Should the report that was presented today be taken as the objective state of affairs in the field, it would serve as the basis for the very automatic action that has so far been resolutely ruled out as a possibility. If a formal evaluation based on this report commences — despite the fact that, realistically speaking, standards have not yet been adequately met — we hope that the new Special Envoy in charge of evaluating the progress achieved will demonstrate a high level of impartiality and personal integrity and that he will summon enough courage to present the situation in Kosovo and Metohija as it really is.

It would be counterproductive to open the status discussions before the standards — the basic provisions of resolution 1244 (1999) — have been substantively implemented. According to the relevant indicators, Kosovo and Metohija is a long way from such implementation. However, should it be decided, in spite of everything, to commence talks on future status. those discussions would be burdened with the extremism of the Albanian leaders, who will perceive erroneously that the international community is yielding to their policy of ethnic cleansing. The issue of future status must be resolved through reaching agreements and finding a compromise, but, above all, in full respect of the basic international principle of preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

As a high-level official of a powerful country recently put it, the road signs to the future are being hurriedly put in place in Kosovo and Metohija. Whether these road signs will lead the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities to a modern, democratic and multi-ethnic society and guide the region towards stability and its future within the European Union, without changing the internationally recognized borders, depends on all of us.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): The Permanent Representative of Luxembourg will shortly make a statement on behalf of the Presidency of the European Union and I associate myself with that statement in advance.

At the outset, Mr. Minister, I would like to welcome your presence in the Chair at this important meeting. I thank Mr. Nebojsa Covic, President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo, for his presence and for his statement. I also thank Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen for his briefing and for the work that he and the personnel of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) are doing on the ground.

We have before us an excellent report (S/2005/335) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Kosovo. France fully shares its observations on meaningful progress made by the people of Kosovo. I particularly welcome the fact that security today has been restored throughout Kosovo thanks to the efforts of everyone, in particular the Kosovo Force (KFOR), which is doing an excellent job. Considerable effort is still necessary in many areas, as correctly underscored by the Secretary-General, but we are aware that implementation of standards for Kosovo will be a long-term effort. The key is to have undertaken this effort and to support it.

France also appreciates the value of the encouraging signs coming from Belgrade, and it welcomes them. We know how difficult it is, after arduous years, to make conciliatory gestures, but such gestures are necessary if we want to hasten the solution of the last conflict in the heart of Europe. We are also encouraged by President Tadic's offer to meet soon with President Rugova and by the planned meeting between the Prime Ministers of Serbia and of Kosovo. Pristina and Belgrade need to step up their contacts at all political and technical levels.

I should also like to reaffirm our desire for Serbia and Montenegro to be fully associated with the emerging negotiation process. In exchange, the Belgrade authorities need to put an end to their tactic of obstruction, which prevents Kosovo Serbs from participating in the public institutions of Kosovo. The "vacant chair policy" entails major risks that the

history of Kosovo will be written without the Kosovo Serbs. We appeal to reason at this critical time, when the destiny of the territory is at stake.

France supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to launch a comprehensive evaluation of the situation and to appoint a Special Envoy for that purpose. Indeed, in December 2003 the Council undertook a comprehensive strategy aimed at ending, in full accordance with resolution 1244 (1999), the unacceptable status quo. One of the key elements of that strategy was to carry out a comprehensive review of the implementation of standards at mid-2005. The time has come to carry out that review objectively and calmly. This is a question of consistency for the Council and for the international community.

I would like to underscore here that the outcome of the comprehensive review is not a foregone conclusion. That is no mere formulaic statement: we need to give the Special Envoy the necessary time to carry out this work without being locked into an artificial timetable. We need to then consider how to follow up the recommendations. No one should prejudge them. It is progress that will determine the timetable.

My country also supports the conditions that the Secretary-General has established with respect to continuing the process. First, progress needs to be intensified, especially in the priority areas related to the rights of the Kosovo Serbs. Clearly, we need to know whether and how the Kosovo Serbs will be able to continue to live in Kosovo or to return under conditions that are consistent with law, equity and the standards that prevail in Europe today. Major efforts are still needed to give full effect to the rights of the Kosovo Serbs in such areas as freedom of movement; basic conditions conducive to the return of refugees and displaced persons, including the question of ownership rights and the economy; and the protection of Serb religious sites and memorials.

We also expect concrete, decisive progress in the area of decentralization. But let us not mislead ourselves: this is a challenge for all of Kosovo, and not only for a minority. It would be regrettable if ethnic confrontations or partisan politicking delayed the implementation of this key goal with respect to the modernization of Kosovo's public institutions.

I would like to underscore that we will remain vigilant on these issues, particularly through the quarterly reports that the Secretary-General will continue to provide to the Security Council. It is my hope that we will be able to continue to move forward towards a settlement of this conflict to the benefit to all those living in Kosovo and throughout the region.

Mr. Motoc (Romania): My delegation is delighted, Mr. Minister, to see you personally chairing the second important meeting of the Council in a row. As I will point out further on, it seems that more that one connection can be established between these meetings.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his carefully balanced report on the situation in Kosovo (S2005/335). I would also like to thank the Special Representative for his briefing today, for his work in Kosovo and for providing us with a useful technical assessment of standards implementation.

As always, we convey our appreciation and gratitude to the men and women of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo UNMIK) and its partners on the ground — the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) — and well as to the Kosovo Force (KFOR). Romania would like to assure the Special Representative of its full support.

I welcome the participation at this important meeting of the representative of Serbia and Montenegro, Minister Nebojsa Covic, President of the Coordination Centre of Kosovo and Metohija.

Romania fully associates itself with the statement that will be made shortly by Ambassador Hoscheit of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

Romania is pleased to note that the "standards before status" policy, designed in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999), is starting to bear fruit. We welcome in this regard the continuing trend reported by the Secretary-General in standards implementation. We welcome in particular the cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the subsequent demonstration of the growing political maturity of Kosovo's leaders. Romania concurs with the Secretary-General that standards are above all goals in and of themselves. They are the roadmap not only to the political process to determine the future status of Kosovo, but also to the very connection to and integration with the larger European family.

Indications of the growing investment that Belgrade and Pristina are making in the sectoral dialogue are encouraging, but the recently expressed readiness to engage in political dialogue as well must be supported so that it can materialize.

We encourage the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and the inhabitants of Kosovo, of all ethnicities, to keep up and enhance efforts for a stable, democratic, tolerant and truly multi-ethnic Kosovo, and we support those efforts. However, the day when a Kosovo Serb or Albanian walks freely, fearlessly and in full dignity anywhere in Kosovo is not here yet. That was one of the promises of resolution 1244 (1999), and the Security Council must continue to uphold it.

In this context, we share the concern of the Secretary-General that deficiencies remain in all categories of standards, including in key priority areas. Much remains to be done, and we need to see more concrete, tangible results in many fields, such as returns, freedom of movement, rule of law and protection and preservation of the religious and cultural heritage. The provisional authorities of Kosovo need to accelerate the implementation of the standards policy.

Given the current situation in Kosovo, and considering that uncertainty neither benefits regional stability nor encourages the sustained efforts needed for creating a tolerant and democratic environment, a comprehensive review of the implementation could be initiated, as recommended by the Secretary-General. We believe that this review should be seen as a means to encourage the further implementation of the standards by showing which specific areas need to be addressed most urgently. We also believe that the Council should look beyond this first comprehensive review and plan accordingly for a continuation of the review mechanism.

The process on Kosovo is of paramount importance for the entire region, and understandably, it is followed with great attention by political leaders and public opinion in South-East Europe.

Recently, the heads of State and Government of countries participating in the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), meeting in Bucharest, expressed support for the full implementation of the standards policy and for respect for Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). They called for a renewed and constructive dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. The leaders of South-East Europe also declared that the process of standards evaluation, the commencement of negotiations on the future status of Kosovo and the establishment of a democratic and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo are of great significance for the region's overall stability.

We believe that in this way a genuine "voice of the region" has expressed itself very clearly on what it expects with regard to Kosovo. The matter before the Council today obviously had high priority on the agenda of the Romanian chairmanship of the SEECP, and we trust that the same kind of attention will be central to the activities of the current Greek chairmanship as well.

Romania considers that effective mechanisms need to be put in place to counter organized crime and promote sustainable economic growth in Kosovo.

More generally, we believe that there is no solution outside a European and Euro-Atlantic perspective for the region, including for Serbia and Montenegro. There have been encouraging signs of advancement in that direction lately. Opening up European and Euro-Atlantic perspectives to Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo will facilitate the process and ensure a positive attitude and more willingness to carry out the necessary reforms.

On a particular note, Romania considers that a substantive dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade and between communities in Kosovo — including, especially, on political matters — is essential at this moment. Such dialogue should contribute not only to the advancement of the political process, but also to a better environment of trust and confidence. In this respect Romania welcomes the openness for dialogue expressed recently by the high-level authorities of Serbia and Montenegro and of Serbia. In the same vein, we call on the Kosovo Serb representatives to assume their role in the political life in Kosovo. In fact, we do not envisage an effective and viable solution for Kosovo that is not be based on genuine dialogue and compromise among those concerned.

Yesterday the Council took up, in the frame of an inspired Danish initiative, the issues of peacebuilding and preventing relapses into conflict. On the topic today, the best peacebuilding offer we see for the Western Balkans is their inclusion in the mainstream European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes. What Romania wishes to see in the Western Balkans is

sustainable security and stability, based on democracy, freedom and tolerance. That is a complex challenge that has Kosovo as a nodal point. To achieve it we need commitment, political maturity, dialogue and vision from all involved.

I would like to conclude by asking the Special Representative to give us a few more elements on measures taken in Kosovo to fight organized crime, which is an important challenge for the entire region.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): I wish at the outset to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Søren Jessen-Petersen, for his insightful and comprehensive presentation on the report of the Secretary-General on Kosovo. I avail myself of this opportunity to renew the expression of Brazil's support for the excellent work he is doing at the head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

As Kosovo approaches a unique, decisive moment, with consequences for the entire Balkan region, we are encouraged by the indications of increased awareness on the part of Kosovo's people and leadership about the effort that lies ahead. Growing commitment by the Provisional Institutions to meet the conditions necessary to start the talks on the final status is a welcome sign of political maturity. The Secretary-General's report and the briefing by the Special Representative highlight that a significant proportion of the Priority Standards Goals have been achieved. This enhances the prospects for launching of the status talks this year.

Fortunately, since the regrettable outbreaks of violence last year, the Provisional Institutions have intensified their efforts to implement the standards. Consistent efforts to improve the situation of minority communities in the province were made, with a view to fulfilling an essential precondition for advancement towards the process to determine Kosovo's status.

The dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade was also somewhat improved. We welcome the resumption of the work of the working groups on missing persons, energy, the return of displaced persons and transport and telecommunications. As to much-needed economic reform, steps made in the privatization process and with respect to economic integration into the region are encouraging. Much remains to be done, though, given the dire economic situation of Kosovo, which has still to deal with an unemployment rate higher than 60 per cent.

In spite of all the positive elements, the temptation to offer an excessively positive assessment of the situation should be avoided. The Secretary-General warns in an unequivocal way that none of the eight standards has so far been entirely fulfilled. The situation of minorities is still a reason for concern, especially regarding freedom of movement and access to justice. Also, refugees and displaced persons still face a desperate predicament, as the slow pace of the returns process is hindering the achievement of the related standard. There is also much to be done regarding the prevalence of the rule of law, the reform of local government and the full enjoyment by all citizens of their fundamental rights.

Responsibility for the process must not be put entirely on the Kosovo Government's shoulders. Minorities, especially the Serb minority, have the fundamental obligation of engaging fully in the quest for solutions by taking advantage of all opportunities to participate in Kosovo's institutions. The Serbs must be encouraged by Belgrade to do so.

The Security Council must remain committed to resolution 1244 (1999) and to the "standards before status" policy, under which definitive progress in standards implementation is a precondition for the determination of final status.

We believe that the intention of the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Envoy to lead the assessment process, starting this year, will indicate the road ahead. By carrying on consultations with the parties and the international community, the Special Envoy will be able to make an independent evaluation of the work done se far. The assessment of the level of attainment of the standards will help determine whether the conditions for final status talks have been created.

More than ever before, any freezing of the current situation in Kosovo would lead to further deterioration of already difficult political, social and economic conditions. The review process, therefore, should be carried out with great seriousness. Above all, its conclusions and results must not be anticipated or taken for granted. None of the parties should be allowed to unduly influence the results of the review with threats of any kind, and the Council must make it

clear that the resurgence of violence will not be rewarded.

The persistent efforts to achieve dialogue and understanding between the parties through the mediation carried out by the Contact Group have been instrumental in pushing the whole process forward. Peace in Kosovo should ultimately rely on winning the hearts of the people. Healing the wounds of the past and rebuilding bridges between the various communities will create an environment more favourable to tolerance. All parties must be ready to work towards a compromise capable of turning Kosovo from a source of instability into a model of peaceful inter-ethnic coexistence.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Kosovo (S/2005/335). We also thank his Special Representative, Mr. Jessen-Petersen, for his informative and, I have to say, candid briefing. I wish to welcome Mr. Covic, President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, to our meeting today.

Greece associates itself fully with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

I am sure that all members know what the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus said: "*Ta panta rhei* — Everything in life is in flux". In recent years, we have often heard the expression "road map". Reading the report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/335), we believe that both expressions could apply to recent developments in Kosovo. In other words, since our last meeting on this item, in February (see S/PV.5130), things have been moving. Overall, the picture remains mixed: some more progress, but still some delays; headway being made, but serious lags in some areas. As the Secretary-General points out in his report, none of the standards has been entirely fulfilled and serious deficiencies remain in key areas. A great deal of work lies ahead of us. Let us go into this process with our eyes wide open.

Decentralization, to a large extent, holds the key to success in restoring confidence and promoting returns. And yet it has been allowed to slow almost to a halt. An easy excuse can be offered: it does not feature formally as one of the eight standards to be implemented. Yet we all know — and the Secretary-General's report makes it clear — that it is a key measure in building the new Kosovo. It remains so regardless of the standards, a number of which would actually be facilitated by its completion. In that respect, we welcome the participation for the first time of Kosovo Serbs in the relevant working group.

On the important front of returns, no significant progress has been reported. There can be no alternative to success in this area. Evidently, efforts have to be strengthened. Also, let us repeat once more that Kosovo Serbs need to re-engage in full dialogue on all levels with the Provisional Institutions; they have to demonstrate their commitment to integrating into Kosovo society.

According to the report, improvement has been achieved in freedom of movement as well as in the security situation. But the integrated transport system has yet to become a reality; the zero-tolerance policy for acts that threaten this freedom needs to be implemented urgently and fully.

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of the signing of the memorandum of understanding on the reconstruction of Serbian Orthodox religious sites damaged during the May 2004 riots. That constitutes an encouraging sign of public outreach by Kosovo's leaders to the Kosovo Serbs.

Some good steps have also been taken in the direction of economic reconstruction. Progress in the privatization process is long overdue but is nevertheless very welcome. Let us hope that the pace of recovery will increase as the necessary structural reforms are being completed.

The regional perspective should be fully exploited. In that respect, the goals of economic cooperation within the South-East European Cooperation Process and the question of how these can include Kosovo should be further explored and pursued. Greece, as part of the region and as current Chairman of the South-East European Cooperation Process, is actively engaged in promoting the deepening of cooperation in the region.

The internal political situation in Kosovo remains a real concern. The Kosovar people showed remarkable political maturity when former Prime Minister Haradinaj was indicted and surrendered voluntarily to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former

Yugoslavia. Since then, a new coalition Government has taken over; the transition was smooth and orderly.

Nevertheless, internal bickering and tension have continued, along with incidents of violence, which are a by-product of that kind of atmosphere. If the situation is allowed to deteriorate, this will inevitably influence future developments. The creation of a democratic society in Kosovo is a fundamental prerequisite for the future stability of the whole region. That cannot be overlooked.

Bearing in mind the progress in all aspects of the strategy proposed in November 2004 and the efforts undertaken by the Provisional Institutions, the Secretary-General has concluded that a comprehensive review should be initiated this summer. The review is to be conducted in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999) and the relevant presidential statements of the Security Council. On balance — a very fine balance — we share the Secretary-General's view that we could move on to the launch of the comprehensive review.

This new stage in the process will not, however, mean that the standards implementation goal has been achieved. On the contrary, for the Provisional Institutions it should mean shifting into a higher gear. The international community's expectations will not remain at their current level but will increase as time goes by; the deliverables from Pristina should match that.

The resumption of dialogue on practical matters between Belgrade and Pristina points the way to the future. We expect that such dialogue will resume soon at all levels. The invitations by both President Tadic and Prime Minister Kostunica to, respectively, President Rugova and Prime Minister Kosumi, are a welcome initiative and deserve our full support. Just as we urge Belgrade to engage in dialogue with the provisional authorities, so we must now make clear to the Provisional Institutions that there can be no avoiding a direct dialogue with Belgrade.

Greece has undertaken a series of diplomatic initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue among the parties based on the principle of the peaceful resolution of disputes through negotiated settlement. In this context, the Prime Minister of Greece recently visited the region, including Belgrade and Pristina.

It is our hope that Kosovo will one day become an equal participant in the region's stability and prosperity — an integral part of the enlarged European family. Therefore, no less than complete implementation of all the goals in the standards plan is a prerequisite.

Mr. Mercado (Philippines): I join other delegations in welcoming you, Sir, to the Chair. I should also like to welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Ambassador Søren Jessen-Petersen, and to thank him for introducing the report of the Secretary-General, as well as for his update on the situation in Kosovo. We also welcome the President of the Coordination Centre of Kosovo and Metohija, Mr. Nebojsa Covic.

The Philippines is encouraged by the Secretary-General's assessment that much progress has been made in efforts to promote multi-ethnicity in Kosovo, and we hope that that momentum will pave the way for the start of discussions of its final status sooner, rather than later. We are pleased to note the progress achieved in the implementation of such standards as functioning democratic institutions, freedom of movement, sustainable returns and minority rights. We are also heartened by the determination exhibited by Kosovo's leaders to pursue the implementation of these and other standards.

The Philippines welcomes the resumption of direct dialogue on practical matters between Belgrade and Pristina after a lull of more than 12 months and the expressed willingness of Belgrade to engage in that important process. We look forward to the planned meetings between President Tadic and President Rugova and Prime Minister Kostunica and Prime Minister Kosumi, and hope that those high-level interactions will contribute constructively to the process.

The Philippines, however, shares the assessment of the Secretary-General and the representative of Serbia that much more needs to be done in implementation of the standards. While such efforts may not be enough to lead to the immediate resolution of Kosovo's final status, we are confident that the necessary political will can be mustered in the coming days and weeks to catapult the process in the right direction.

Kosovo is the last piece of the Balkan jigsaw puzzle, and it is of the utmost importance that all actors

engage constructively so as to put the final piece of the puzzle in place as soon as possible. In this connection, the Philippines throws its full support behind the Secretary-General's proposal to carry out a comprehensive review of the implementation of the standards over the next several weeks. We also welcome the positive outcome of last Monday's Contact Group meeting in London, which endorsed the comprehensive review proposed by the Secretary-General. However, the international community must also make it clear that the comprehensive review was proposed on the premise that Kosovo's leaders would continue to make progress in the implementation of the standards. Discussion of Kosovo's final status will therefore be dependent on the outcome of the review.

Kosovo's leaders hold the key to the future. If they want to open the door to final status, they will have to make significant strides in implementation of the standards in the weeks and months to come. They need to collectively demonstrate a genuine and concrete commitment to create a society where all communities can coexist peacefully and in which the rights of members of all of Kosovo's minority groups are respected, safeguarded and guaranteed. The Provisional Institutions must exert greater efforts to convince Kosovo Serbs to participate in the process. Meanwhile, Belgrade must also do its share in moving the process forward.

Kosovo cannot allow its past to rule its present and its future. In his report to the Security Council (S/2005/335), the Secretary-General takes note of the principles laid down by the Contact Group for a solution to Kosovo's final status, which exclude the partition of Kosovo, its union with any country or part of any country, and its return to the situation before March 1999. As the time to decide Kosovo's fate draws nearer, my delegation believes that the Council should start to consider its exit strategy for the province. Kosovo's future is well within sight, but it is up to Kosovo's leaders and its people to determine how and when they will get there. We in the international community should continue to encourage them and show them the way.

Lastly, allow me to again express my delegation's support for the earlier recommendation that the Security Council send a mission to Kosovo either before, during or after the comprehensive review. It is important that the members of the Council have a firm grasp of the situation on the ground, if and when Kosovo's final status is taken up.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): We join previous speakers in welcoming the report of the Secretary-General and in commending the Special Representative, Mr. Jessen-Petersen, for his briefing. We, too, welcome the presence of the Minister of Serbia and Montenegro here this morning.

We are encouraged by key achievements in the eight standards set for Kosovo, and call upon the Government and all other actors to strive to achieve the other priority goals as set out in the technical assessment report.

We, too, commend the calm reaction by the people of Kosovo following the recent indictment of former Prime Minister Haradinaj. We are relieved that what had been feared did not come to pass. We see their response as an illustration of growing political maturity in Kosovo. However, we are concerned at reports that tension between governing and opposition parties has intensified. We urge politicians and rival political parties in Kosovo to cooperate in consolidating progress towards unity and final status for Kosovo.

We note that efforts to reform local government have faced delays. In our view, such negative developments only work to undermine the evolution of important institutions that are critical for genuine self-government. Such delays should not be tolerated by the parties in Kosovo or by anyone else, for they can only engender instability. We know this, for it is all too familiar in areas of conflict in our own region. Local government reform programmes must not await final status negotiations. Delay only weakens the political process. However, we have heard with relief from the Special Representative this morning of specific measures now being undertaken to avert such delays. We welcome this renewed commitment.

We also welcome the direct dialogue established between Belgrade and Pristina on practical matters. This is an important step towards normalization of relations between the two sides. The signing of the memorandum of understanding to reconstruct Serbian Orthodox religious sites damaged in March 2004 is yet another positive element. It is in this spirit that we support the effort of the Special Representative to arrange a meeting between President Tadic of the Republic of Serbia and President Rugova.

We are encouraged by reported improvements in the freedom of movement and in the promotion of the return of displaced persons, and we urge that a more conducive atmosphere be put in place to allow more returns.

We are also encouraged by the steps taken to establish a framework for Kosovo's economic development and its economic integration in the region as a means of addressing Kosovo's difficult economic situation and to assist in generating employment.

We are too conscious that Mr. Jessen-Petersen has a tough job and is working under difficult circumstances. We take this opportunity to commend him and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo for what we believe is the good work they are doing in Kosovo. We also commend the European Union and other financial institutions for their financial support, which will enable Kosovo to become a fully functioning economy and a democracy.

Mr. Holliday (United States of America): I would like to welcome back Special Representative Jessen-Petersen to the Council and thank him for his excellent briefing. I would also like to thank Mr. Covic for joining us here today and for his statement.

We have reached an important milestone in Kosovo. After six years of working with the people of Kosovo to establish a stable, multi-ethnic society, the time has come to step back and assess their progress.

We welcome the Secretary-General's decision to initiate a comprehensive review this summer of Kosovo's progress in implementing the United Nations-endorsed standards, and his intention to appoint a special envoy to carry out that review. The review will cover the benchmarks that lay out the path to a multi-ethnic, democratic and prosperous society. It will provide the basis to judge whether there has been sufficient progress to justify the start of a political process to determine Kosovo's final status, which has remained undetermined during the last six years. The United States believes that while Kosovo is on the right track, it still must make a major effort prior to the comprehensive review to implement the standards.

Nevertheless, we should not take a positive outcome of the review as a foregone conclusion, nor should we assume that the subsequent launch of a final status process will be automatic. Both will depend on the outcome of the review, and that outcome is in the hands of Kosovo's leaders, who should continue their progress in implementing the standards.

Progress is needed on all the standards, but particular emphasis should be placed on standards affecting the multi-ethnic character of Kosovo. The primary test of whether Kosovo has overcome the tragic problems of the past and matured sufficiently to allow the start of a final status process will be its treatment of its minority communities. Effective reform of local government, or decentralization, will be a key test in this regard. The early launch of the already announced pilot projects would help show the Provisional Institutions' commitment to making progress in an area of real concern to Kosovo's minorities and would further the prospects for a positive review.

With the comprehensive review imminent and the prospect of final status talks approaching, we also look to Serbia and Montenegro to engage constructively. We welcome the preliminary signs that it is doing so. Belgrade's decision to encourage Kosovo Serbs to participate in the decentralization working groups is a welcome step, as is the resumption of direct dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina on other vital issues, such as energy, missing persons and transport.

In other areas, however, Belgrade continues to discourage Kosovo Serbs from returning to their seats in the Assembly and to their positions in Kosovo's institutions and political life. This course is counter-productive to the interests of Serbs in Kosovo. We urge the Government in Belgrade to actively encourage Kosovo Serbs to participate fully in all of Kosovo's political institutions and working groups. Participation is the most effective means for Kosovo's Serbs to advance their interests in Kosovo.

The comprehensive review represents an opportunity not only to address Kosovo's future status soon; it is also an opportunity for Serbia and Montenegro to reclaim its rightful place in European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. We hope Serbia and Montenegro will seize this opening by engaging constructively in Kosovo, maintaining a constructive regional role and fulfilling its commitments to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

Finally, as we set out to review Kosovo's progress, it is appropriate that the United Nations similarly review its mission in Kosovo to determine

whether it is properly organized and sized to meet the current challenges. The mission of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is to ultimately work itself out of a job, and as progress is made in transferring responsibilities to Kosovo's Provisional Institutions, the size of the UNMIK presence should be adjusted accordingly.

Again, we would like to salute and thank the Special Representative for all of his hard work over the last several months.

Thank you, Mr. Minister. I did not get a chance to welcome you, but we are very pleased that you are here.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): Mr. President, I am particularly pleased to welcome you. I am grateful to the Secretary-General for his report and to the Special Representative for his briefing, for his outstanding and, I think, impartial leadership of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and for the integrity that he brings to his work. It is good to welcome Mr. Covic back, and I thank him for his intervention.

The United Kingdom associates itself with the European Union statement to be delivered subsequently by the representative of Luxembourg.

The United Kingdom shares the Secretary-General's assessment that progress in implementing the standards for Kosovo has continued since his last report, although it is clear that further and continuing progress will be required. Kosovo's institutions reacted quickly and calmly in electing a new Government after the indictment by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) of former Prime Minister Haradinaj. The Belgrade Government's calls for calm following that indictment also helped. That voluntary resignation and surrender to the Tribunal is an example of cooperation with the ICTY, which others should certainly follow.

I have four points on priorities for the coming months.

First, the United Kingdom welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations to begin this summer a comprehensive review of Kosovo's progress. We look forward to the early appointment of a special envoy to conduct that review. The outcome of the comprehensive review is not predetermined. Demonstrable progress in the standards implementation process must continue up to, during and beyond the review. It remains up to the Provisional Institutions and all of Kosovo's communities, with UNMIK's help, to make progress on standards if the review is to decide that it is possible to move to the next stage and to start discussing Kosovo's future status, as provided for in Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

However, standards are much more than just a means to future status discussions. They represent fundamental issues which will be decisive for the future of Kosovo and its people, irrespective of issues of status.

Secondly, decentralization, while not formally one of the standards, is a key measure of progress and an important element in reassuring minorities. It is therefore disappointing that there has been little progress on the Government's five decentralization pilot projects since the last time the Council discussed Kosovo, in February. As the Contact Group made clear to Prime Minister Kosumi on 25 May, progress on those pilot projects before and during the comprehensive review will be a factor in determining the outcome of that review.

Thirdly, Kosovo Serbs need to be allowed to play a full part in the political life of Kosovo. I did not say that Kosovo Serbs should play a full part in the life of Kosovo. That, I hope, is obvious. I said they should be allowed to play a full part.

The United Kingdom welcomes the resumption of the direct dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina on energy, missing persons and transport. Kosovo Serb participation this week in the decentralization working groups is also encouraging. In our view, the authorities in Belgrade should now be actively encouraging Kosovo Serbs to take their rightful place in Kosovo's Government institutions. The only way for Kosovo Serb interests to be fully reflected and addressed now and in the future is through the full engagement of Kosovo Serbs in Kosovo's political life.

I like what the Special Representative said when he noted that the fault was not in Kosovo but that the victims were. I also listened to and heard the specific points made by Mr. Covic. But it struck me that the best way to address shortcomings is not across this Chamber. Instead, the Serb interest would be better pursued through constructive engagement by Belgrade and if Belgrade encouraged and empowered the Serbs

in Kosovo to take their full part in the different processes within Kosovo.

Fourthly, the United Kingdom fully supports the Special Representative's emphasis on the importance of restructuring the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Ambassador Kai Eide first brought this to the Council's attention in his report of August 2004 (S/2004/932, annex I, enclosure), and we look forward to action beginning on that soon.

In conclusion, the Secretary-General's report (S/2005/335) and the Special Representative's technical assessment contained in its annex I give cause for qualified optimism. But there can be no room for complacency; there is much more hard work ahead. But Mr. Covic's perception of, for example, freedom of movement for minorities in Kosovo does not seem to us to be borne out by the situation on the ground as reflected by the empirical data in the technical assessment annexed to the Secretary-General's report — an assessment which I did not consider actually to have been "embellished". I use that word because Mr. Covic used it I think, three times. We do not consider it to have been embellished. The trend remains positive, and the Provisional Institutions should continue to work hard on making the implementation of standards of tangible benefit to all Kosovars.

When final status discussions begin, it is clear that an independent Kosovo is one option to be considered. But it is equally clear that Kosovo's final status, whatever it is to be, must be negotiated, must be fair to the interests of all communities in Kosovo and must promote regional stability and multi-ethnicity.

For its part, the United Kingdom, in the Contact Group, in the Council, in the European Union and in the region, will continue to work to build a stable, sustainable European future for Kosovo and for the region as a whole, a future in which we very much hope that Serbia and Montenegro too will assume its rightful place within the European family.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): I would like to thank you, Mr. Minister, for convening and presiding over today's public meeting. I also wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, for his comprehensive briefing. We highly commend Mr. Jessen-Petersen and the staff of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for their proactive and tireless efforts for the future of Kosovo.

Japan recognizes the importance of the "standards before status" policy, endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1244 (1999), and believes that progress in the Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan by the parties, with support from the international community, is essential. The commencement of the comprehensive review will be a significant milestone for the "standards before status" policy.

The Government of Japan highly appreciates the clear commitment and tangible efforts to date on the part of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government for the achievement of the standards, which have included cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the resumption of direct dialogue with Belgrade at the working group level. We welcome recent proposals to hold high-level meetings between Pristina and Belgrade as a step forward and hope that they will contribute to confidence-building between the two parties.

Notwithstanding those indications of good faith, my Government does not believe that any of the standards has been sufficiently fulfilled. Instances of harassment of minorities continue to be reported, and a Kosovo Force (KFOR) escort is still required for the movement of those minorities in some areas. The fragile security situation, combined with high unemployment, has kept the rate of returns of internally displaced persons low. Much remains to be done, especially with regard to the protection of minorities. We welcome the adoption of the Reform of Local Government Working Programme 2005, and call upon all parties to make further efforts for the implementation of that essential project.

We believe that the comprehensive review will foster further progress in achieving the standards by the parties and will crystallise the progress made to date with regard to each standard. From that point of view, we consider it appropriate to begin the review at this time, and we would like to express our support for the Secretary-General's recommendation that a comprehensive review should be initiated this summer. At the same time, Japan would like to underscore that significant progress on all standards, including in addressing the aforementioned problems, must be recognized in the comprehensive review in order for

the review to result in a positive evaluation and for the status talks to begin.

Japan has been providing its support to the Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan through assistance for the independent media and schools for ethnic minorities, among other areas. Our total contribution to Kosovo to date in the fields of reconstruction, humanitarian assistance, democratization and human resources development amounts to approximately $188 million. Projects focusing on medical care, education and human resources development will continue to be undertaken in a proactive manner. Japan intends to continue to play an energetic role in the efforts to shape the future of Kosovo and to contribute to the consolidation of peace and economic development in South-Eastern Europe.

Mr. Babadoudou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Mr. Minister, my delegation wishes to welcome your presence among us this morning; it lends a particular prestige to this Council meeting devoted to the final conflict ravaging the heart of Europe.

My delegation associates itself with preceding speakers in expressing its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2005/335). At the same time, we warmly congratulate Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen on his briefing.

There are two basic elements of the briefing to which we should like to refer. First is the noteworthy improvement in the political climate due to the efforts of all parties fully to implement the eight standards, although none of the standards has been entirely met; second is the need for the international community to focus its efforts on the implementation of those standards as a prerequisite for determining the future status of Kosovo.

In that framework, my delegation urges the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to continue to display their will to lead the transition process to success by giving concrete content to the standards so as to establish a climate of mutual confidence, which can reduce tension and violence, and the conditions for a democratic, multi-ethnic and economically viable Kosovo.

We welcome the expressed readiness of the Serb and Kosovar authorities to meet at the highest levels. Such high-level dialogue, we believe, can help to achieve progress in the implementation of the standards. In particular, it will be necessary to continue to refine the working methods of Parliament, to pursue decentralization, to take measures to facilitate freedom of movement and the resettlement of displaced persons, and to implement the memorandum of understanding on the reconstruction of destroyed Serbian religious sites. We also believe that the establishment of a working framework for the economic development of Kosovo is a priority that should be pursued.

On the basis of all those considerations, my delegation wishes to express its support for the Secretary-General's recommendation that a special envoy be appointed to conduct a field assessment this summer of the implementation of the standards and to shed light on future steps.

The international community must continue to focus its attention on the situation in Kosovo and, in particular, to support the people of Kosovo and their political leaders, who have the primary responsibility for the future of the province. In that context, all means must be applied to allow the participation of the Kosovo Serbs in the process. We also believe that the press could make a major contribution to the climate by raising awareness in that respect.

We hope that the final status of the province can be determined as soon as possible so that the progress achieved on the long march towards normalization can be consolidated.

Mr. Denisov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I welcome you, Sir, as President of the Security Council at today's meeting.

Our delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and to the head of the Mission, Mr. Jessen-Petersen, for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in the province. We welcome and support the participation in today's meeting of the President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, Mr. Nebojsa Covic.

Russia has carefully considered the Secretary-General's report. We endorse his primary conclusions and tenets and agree with his conclusion that, in the area of standards implementation, a good deal of work remains to be done. Our primary concern in that regard

is the fact that, according to the report, not one of the eight primary standards has yet been fully implemented. We are especially distressed by the extremely low number of refugee returns, which are the most useful indicator for assessing the situation in the province. There are also considerable shortcomings in the efforts to reform local institutions of self-government in Kosovo. At the same time, progress in the area of decentralization offers the opportunity to assess the extent to which the authorities have taken into account the legitimate interests of minorities.

Like the Secretary-General, we underscore that the genuine implementation of standards — aimed primarily at ensuring the rights, freedoms and security of ethnic minorities — is not only a test of the readiness to take the political process to the next phase of the settlement, but is above all a criterion of the maturity of the province's government structures and their capacity to establish a truly democratic and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. On that basis, we are convinced that the process of standards implementation should be analysed on the basis not of emerging trends that may be genuinely positive in themselves, but of concrete results. In that context, however, it would still be premature to talk about substantive progress having been made.

At this critical juncture of the settlement in Kosovo, the task of elaborating a coordinated international strategy is of fundamental importance. We are pleased that the outcomes of the meeting of the Balkans Contact Group in London demonstrated the clear intentions of its participants to work together to achieve a stable Kosovo settlement. One such outcome was the agreement of all parties to launch a review process, although the comprehensive review is not an end in itself. We are convinced that its implementation must be consistent with highly specific requirements; above all, it must be thorough and protracted so that the future special envoy dispatched by the Secretary-General to conduct the review will have a genuine opportunity to draw an objective picture of the development of the situation in Kosovo and to prepare a comprehensive policy report for the Security Council. It would also be appropriate for the head of UNMIK to continue to issue technical reports.

The results of the policy review cannot and should not be biased. The process of review must be carried out in all phases of its implementation with the oversight of the Security Council and culminate in a presidential statement. It is crucial that the Contact Group send consolidated signals to the government institutions in Pristina and Belgrade. Belgrade must remain a full participant in the Kosovo process. I reiterate that such consolidated signals must be sent to both parties.

Unfortunately, a number of participants in today's meeting have addressed their criticism primarily to Belgrade. We are certain that the primary effort to ensure the implementation of standards must be taken by the Albanian leadership of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. We share the view that the involvement of Kosovo Serbs in those bodies is perfectly expedient. In that regard, direct contacts between Belgrade and Pristina are vitally important. We welcome the recent initiatives of the Serbian side in that respect.

We reaffirm our fundamental position that resolution 1244 (1999) is the sole political platform for achieving a settlement in Kosovo. The lasting stability of the province will be possible only if an agreed international strategy is elaborated, with the Security Council playing a lead role.

For our part, we are prepared to cooperate closely with the Secretary-General; his Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Jessen-Petersen; the future Special Envoy who will conduct the review; and our partners in the Contact Group, in the common interest of consolidating stability and security for all of the inhabitants of the province.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, let me at the outset welcome the fact that you are personally presiding over today's meeting. I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report and Mr. Jessen-Petersen for his briefing, and to thank Mr. Covic for his introduction.

The situation in Kosovo is now at an important stage with respect to its future as well as the stability of the Balkan region. We have always believed that a comprehensive and proper settlement of the question of Kosovo requires the full implementation of the various standards, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

Meanwhile, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and Montenegro must be respected. According to the Secretary-General's report, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

(UNMIK) and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government have taken some positive measures and have achieved some positive results in the implementation of standards in certain areas.

However, there has been little progress in the areas of the return of refugees and freedom of movement of minorities. Progress has also been slow in dealing with unemployment, economic development and raising the living standards of minorities. We hope that all ethnic groups in Kosovo will endeavour to enhance mutual trust and promote reconciliation so as to lay a good foundation for the establishment of a society characterized by peaceful coexistence.

We welcome the willingness of the leaders of Serbia and Montenegro to engage in direct dialogue with the Kosovo authorities, as this will be conducive to the final settlement of the question of Kosovo. We hope that dialogue will resume as soon as possible and lead to positive developments in the situation.

This year is a very crucial one for Kosovo, as the Security Council will be considering the implementation of the standards. Work on implementation of the standards must therefore continue, and all parties should promote the implementation process in a spirit of sincerity and practicality. Only substantive results in the areas of the economy, security, ethnic reconciliation and the establishment of a society based on multi-ethnic, peaceful coexistence can lead to the definitive settlement of the question of Kosovo.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to express our thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, for the comprehensive briefing that he has just provided on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and on the events that have occurred there in the months of February, March and April. Likewise, I should like to thank Mr. Nebojsa Covic for his statement.

I should like to associate myself with the gratitude expressed in the report to the men and women of UNMIK for their unswerving dedication and commitment to the values and objectives of the Organization in the daily conduct of their tasks. I wish to underscore the fact that my country is the eighth largest troop contributor to the police component of the Mission.

In connection with the issues raised by Mr. Jessen-Petersen, we are pleased to note the efforts made by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government with a view to the full implementation of the standards for Kosovo, as we are convinced that sustained progress in the implementation of those standards is a basic prerequisite for progress to be made in the process that will determine the future status of Kosovo. Nonetheless, it is disturbing to know that acts of non-compliance persist and that none of the standards has yet been entirely implemented.

In that regard, it is fitting to recall that the standards were prepared in order specifically to define the final status of Kosovo in the framework of the "standards before status" policy, which was designed for Kosovo and endorsed by the Council in implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). That is why we consider it essential that those who compose and represent the Provisional Institutions agree to accept and implement those standards, which are understood as goals to be achieved and as a sign of the will of those who live in Kosovo to develop a multi-ethnic, democratic and sustainable society.

Equally of concern is the information regarding the increase in tension between the Government parties and the opposition in the framework of questions that are decisive to the future of Kosovo, as well as the persistence of elements that are prepared to resort to violence. It is undeniable that a possible escalation of violence and an increase in political strife could destabilize the situation and interrupt the process that is necessary to determine the future status of Kosovo.

In that regard, we endorse the Secretary-General's statement in his report that progress depends on a constructive, democratic dynamic between the Government and the opposition. There is a need for a genuine commitment and for the responsible discharge of their respective functions as well as a complete rejection of violence in order to ensure that work is carried out jointly that will yield concrete results for the benefit of the population.

Furthermore, we welcome the progress that has been made in the direct dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade on practical questions, together with the declared will on the part of Belgrade's political leaders to participate in this process. It is also encouraging to see that there is greater freedom of movement and that

the Kosovo Serbs are less dependent on the escorts that accompany them when they travel in majority areas.

In that regard, Argentina agrees with the Secretary-General that mutual trust among the communities of Kosovo is the foundation of lasting security. This means mainly that the Kosovo Albanians and their leaders must step up their efforts to reach out to the Kosovo Serbs, while the latter must show their concrete will to integrate into Kosovo society.

Argentina affirms that there can be no prosperous and peaceful future for Kosovo without full respect for the diversity of its people. A lasting solution to the question of Kosovo must be reached on the basis of full respect for the principle of territorial integrity.

In that framework, we believe that it is a matter of priority to emphasize the importance of respect for human rights — including the rights of refugees and of displaced persons — and international humanitarian law as well as respect for the rights of minorities.

The political process must be propelled by the achievement of real progress in the implementation of the eight standards, an achievement which is essential to the sustainability of any process related to the future status of Kosovo. In that regard, we support the conducting of a comprehensive review under the terms of resolution 1244 (1999) in order to evaluate the current situation and conditions with a view to the adoption of measures in accordance with the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

We believe that the support given by the international community to those who have responsibilities in the process — that is, the population of Kosovo and their representatives in the Provisional Institutions — will help the process move towards ensuring the sustainability of a potential political agreement.

Mr. El Hadj Ali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is delighted to have you here among us, Mr. Minister. I would like to thank Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen for his dynamic work at the head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for the initiatives that he has taken, in particular regarding the organization of a forum of Kosovo political leaders, and for his fine introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/335) on the situation in Kosovo. I also welcome Mr. Nebojsa Covic, President of the Coordination C[illegible] of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo.

Today's debate has enabled us to assess the progress made in the process of stabilization and normalization of the overall situation in Kosovo. Significant progress has been made in a variety of fields, notably as regards the implementation of reforms and the strengthening of local institutions. In that connection, we welcome the actions undertaken by the coalition Government and the local authorities in the framework of the process of détente and of improvement in the socio-economic situation of the inhabitants of Kosovo.

We have noted with interest the encouraging results regarding freedom of movement and the return of displaced populations. To be sure, progress in this area remains limited, but its impact is significant in confidence-building and in promoting reconciliation among Kosovans. It is also of utmost importance to recall the need for all Kosovans both to support the democratic process and to participate in the management of local institutions. In that regard, we believe that the resumption of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina constitutes a positive step in developing closer links among Kosovans and in improving relations between the parties concerned.

The noteworthy progress made in the overall situation in Kosovo deserves the full attention and support of all. Nonetheless, it remains insufficient vis-à-vis the standards established by the international community. The international community must therefore create the conditions for the comprehensive implementation and success of those standards, and proceed, as soon as possible, to a review of the basic question of Kosovo's final status. In that regard, we support the idea of the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Envoy.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Like others, I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2005/335) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, for his briefing, which I particularly appreciated for its fine balance, discerning detail and forward-looking thrust.

I have full respect and admiration for the impressive results achieved by Mr. Jessen-Petersen and his staff during his tenure. I also commend the Kosovo Force (KFOR), the UNMIK police and the Kosovo Police Service for having shown great skill and professionalism in maintaining a secure and stable environment through a challenging period. Their continued presence and professionalism will be needed for some time to come.

I would also like to thank Mr. Covic for his statement and for his presence here today.

The representative of Luxembourg will shortly make a statement on behalf of the European Union, and Denmark fully associates itself with that statement.

I should like to tell members that last week I visited Belgrade and Pristina and had the opportunity to discuss the situation in Kosovo in general, and, specifically, standards implementation, with the central players on the ground. I made the point, which has also been made so clearly by most speakers today, that we are not there yet. Standards implementation must not slow down and will have to continue for a long time yet. In a number of key areas, not least with regard to decentralization, returns and the direct dialogue with Belgrade, much more needs to be done, and quickly.

We also need to see progress with regard to Kosovo Serb participation in the political process. Belgrade should soon come forward with a clear signal in that regard. Standards implementation and the commitment to securing a multi-ethnic, democratic Kosovo will also be a long-term requirement for Kosovo's integration into the European Union.

In general, however, we have seen tangible progress in the reporting period. More important, we have seen a clear demonstration of political will and capacity to maintain momentum in the continued standards process. We acknowledge that major shortcomings still exist which need to be addressed. But in the light of the progress, the assessment of the Danish Government is that it is now possible and recommendable to move on to the next phase, to a comprehensive review this summer, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999) and relevant presidential statements of the Security Council.

I am happy to see the Secretary-General reach the same conclusion in his report. I fully share his analysis that we have seen intensified efforts to implement standards, which reflect the recognizable political maturity and commitment of the Kosovo leaders. I urge the Secretary-General to move ahead now as he suggests. My Government will do its utmost to support him and the Special Envoy he will name in their efforts in this next and crucial phase.

We hope, and we are optimistic, that the comprehensive review will lead to a decision to start a negotiation process in the autumn that will determine Kosovo's final status. It should be stated clearly that there is no automaticity for the start of such talks. The outcome of the review will be decisive in that regard. But we also feel strongly that the time has come to move on. Kosovo's unresolved status is in nobody's interest. It creates political insecurity, discourages returns, feeds extremist designs, scares off foreign direct investment and maintains the inhabitants of Kosovo, irrespective of ethnicity, in the grip of massive unemployment and economic misery. It is simply not sustainable.

I share the view expressed by many today that there will be no going back to the status quo ante. We should not prejudge the outcome of the status talks, but obviously we will not see a return to the pre-March 1999 situation. Just as a reintegration of Kosovo into Serbia or a territorial division of Kosovo can be excluded, so can a union of Kosovo with another country, or a solution dictated unilaterally by one of the parties.

One of the most dreadful decades of Balkan history ended five years ago. We should now put it behind us. The time has come to start an inclusive and regionally-based process with a view to solving one of the last outstanding issues following from the violent conflicts of the former Yugoslavia. Once an agreement on Kosovo's final status has been found, we can look forward to a more peaceful and prosperous future that the peoples of South-Eastern Europe deserve. Then we can look towards close regional cooperation between former foes and towards the common integration of these truly European countries into the Euro-Atlantic institutions where they so rightfully belong.

I urge the Secretary-General to start our journey down that road now and to take the first step today.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Luxembourg, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey and Croatia and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, for his briefing and for his work, and by reiterating the European Union's full support for his work.

Since the Secretary-General and the Special Representative last reported to the Council on the situation in Kosovo in February, significant progress has been achieved. Most important, we note that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government have shown an encouraging and demonstrable level of commitment to move forward in the implementation of the standards.

The security situation during the period under review was generally calm. We commend the political leaders for their stance and for the mature manner in which they handled the announcement by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia of the indictment of the former Prime Minister, as well as for the fairly smooth process leading to the appointment of a new Prime Minister. For the European Union, cooperation with the Tribunal has always been, and remains, a key issue in Kosovo and in the region as a whole, as it has direct impact on progress towards its European ambitions.

The European Union attaches great importance to the establishment of a direct and sustained high-level dialogue among all Kosovo communities, as well as between Belgrade and Pristina. It notes with interest that meetings between the respective Presidents and Prime Ministers might take place soon. It furthermore calls upon all communities to actively participate in the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and in all ongoing processes. In that context, the European Union welcomes the participation this week, for the first time, of Kosovo Serb representatives at the meeting of the working group on decentralization, and it calls upon Belgrade to encourage further Kosovo Serb participation in the political life of Kosovo.

The European Union shares the Secretary-General's assessment that, given the commitment of the Provisional Institutions and the progress being achieved in what were identified as priority areas, and assuming that such progress will continue uninterrupted, the comprehensive review foreseen in the Security Council presidential statement of 12 December 2003 (S/PRST/2003/26) should take place this summer. We therefore support the Secretary-General's intention to appoint a Special Envoy to conduct that review in the near future, and we welcome the openness and broad scope of the review process.

Despite the assessment that sufficient progress has been made to justify the start of an exhaustive evaluation at this point, the European Union recognizes that none of the eight standards has been fully implemented, and that deficiencies remain in key priority areas.

The Provisional Institutions and Kosovo's political leaders should therefore be aware that neither the outcome of the review process nor the initiation of any further steps thereafter is not a foregone conclusion. The implementation of the standards is a long-term endeavour and is expected to continue throughout the evaluation process and beyond.

When I had the opportunity to address the Council on this issue in February (see S/PV.5130), I said that the protection of minority communities, the return of refugees and displaced persons, freedom of movement and decentralization were areas that needed particular attention, given their direct link to our common goal of a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo. In his report, the Secretary-General notes some measure of improvement in all of those areas except the central issue of local government reform and, in particular, decentralization, where progress has been lacking.

As the Secretary-General points out in paragraph 9 of his report (S/2005/335),

> "achieving concrete results in the local government reform process will influence prospects for the political process to determine Kosovo's future status".

It is thus essential to move forward rapidly in the implementation of pilot projects, including those in areas where Kosovo Serbs form the majority.

Despite the many justified caveats, the Secretary-General's recommendation to initiate a critical and comprehensive review of standards implementation this summer is a momentous event for the people of Kosovo. That recommendation should be interpreted as both a recognition by the international community of progress already achieved and a powerful incentive to maintain and increase the momentum of ongoing reforms. The European Union will continue to support a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, characterized by the protection that it provides to its minorities, as it endeavours to translate into reality its European aspirations, regardless of its future status.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Ukraine, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): I would like at the outset to congratulate you, Madam, on the successful and productive Danish presidency of the Security Council this month.

I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, for his informative and, I must say, encouraging briefing, and to welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2005/335).

Let me also welcome the participation in today's meeting of the President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, Mr. Nebojsa Covic.

More than a year after the tragic events of March 2004, the general situation in Kosovo is now well on track — hopefully, towards substantial progress. In this regard, we commend the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government for their consistent and proactive efforts to implement Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and to bring about positive change in the areas covered by the eight standards. We also commend the tireless and efficient work of Mr. Jessen-Petersen as Head of the Mission, and take this opportunity to assure him of Ukraine's continuing support.

The Secretary-General's report reflects many promising developments on the ground. The international presence has achieved a number of important results in strengthening the foundation for the democratic transformation of Kosovo. However, we cannot but note the uneven progress in the implementation of the standards, primarily those focusing on minority issues, which is reflected in the Secretary-General's report. In this regard, we are particularly concerned about the continuing lack of headway in the areas of minority freedom of movement, sustainable returns and relevant minority representation in governmental structures and in the public sector as a whole. While the security situation has remained stable in recent months, the safety of minorities still needs further improvement. Another serious challenge to the process are the problems of Kosovo's economy, accompanied by high unemployment rates.

It is obvious that ultimate progress in these areas will require further concerted efforts by the international community, Belgrade and the Kosovars. We have seen many commitments on the part of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government with respect to the implementation of the standards; we expect those commitments to be translated into real deeds.

The situation in Kosovo remains fragile and requires a continuous international presence on the ground, particularly during the extremely sensitive period ahead of us. Ukraine, as a major police contributor to UNMIK, is aware of the importance of maintaining an appropriate security level at this stage. In this respect, we would like to draw the Council's attention to the need for donors to fully meet their financial obligations to the police-contributing States in a timely manner. A further failure to do so might limit the capacity of those countries to provide the necessary personnel, thus compromising security in the region.

As an active contributor to the Kosovo settlement, Ukraine reaffirms its commitment to promoting peace and security in the province and to ensuring its further stabilization and recovery.

We are standing now at the threshold of a comprehensive review that will have a crucial impact on the timing of the final status talks.

My country expects that our discussion today will lead to the adoption of a carefully balanced approach that will facilitate the advancement of the goal of building a politically stable, multi-ethnic and

prosperous Kosovo, in full conjunction with resolution 1244 (1999).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, I would first of all like to congratulate you on the skill and commitment with which your country has conducted the presidency of the Security Council during the month of May 2005.

Over the last few years, the United Nations has been strongly committed to preparing the ground for establishing substantial autonomy and self-administration in Kosovo. Although considerable progress has been achieved, there is still much to be done, in particular in the areas of the democratic functioning of institutions, the rule of law and respect for minorities and human rights. We fully share the Secretary-General's analysis on this subject in the report he has just submitted to the Security Council (S/2005/335). We are delighted with the unswerving work of the Special Representative and with the statement he made this morning.

In order to achieve more concrete progress, the international community must act in a more concerted manner and with greater determination to put the basic framework in place. But the Serb and Kosovar leaders too must make greater efforts to assume their full responsibilities. This is crucial now that the assessment of standards is entering a decisive phase.

Since the NATO intervention in 1999, Kosovo has been de facto separated from Serbia and Montenegro, although de jure it remains part of that country. That situation is neither satisfactory nor desirable. Switzerland considers that the time has come to launch, between now and the end of the year, a discussion on the future status of Kosovo. For Switzerland, several parameters should guide our thoughts.

First, it is important to take into account two equally legitimate desires: on the one hand, the demand of the minorities to live in safety, to have the same opportunities for economic development, to have the same access to social services and education and to exercise the right of return; on the other hand, the will of the majority of the population to exercise its right of self-determination.

Secondly, Switzerland welcomes the first steps that have been made towards a dialogue between Serb and Kosovar leaders. A return of Kosovo to Serb sovereignty is neither desirable nor realistic. Nevertheless, the evolution towards formal independence of Kosovo must happen under close international monitoring, as well as through negotiations with the authorities in Belgrade, as this independence cannot be imposed on them.

Thirdly, the question of Kosovo must be addressed from a regional perspective. The commitment of the international community to maintain multi-ethnic States in South Eastern Europe is fundamental. It is the only feasible long-term policy. A division of Kosovo would be contrary to this approach and must be ruled out. What is important is to promote the decentralization of power in order to allow the Serbs of Kosovo to enjoy real opportunities to pursue their development and to take an active part in determining the political future of Kosovo.

Switzerland welcomes the fact that the first steps have been taken to establish a dialogue between the leaders of Serbia and of Kosovo. The readiness to conduct such a discussion at the highest level is a necessary condition to unblock the current situation and to advance the discussion on standards and status.

Switzerland has been closely involved in the region since the outbreak of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. It has used considerable resources, backing its efforts with more than one and a half billion Swiss francs since 199[illegible] Switzerland is especially active in Kosovo, at different levels.

My country's contribution is based on its own historical experiences, but also, and above all, it addresses real local needs in the areas of consolidation of local democracy, decentralization and reinforcing the mechanisms for the protection of minorities. Switzerland wishes to make a useful contribution to the efforts of the international community and is ready to play a role as facilitator. It is already active in supporting a dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, as well as between the various communities, and is ready to pursue this role further.

Even if the status question is resolved in the near future, the prevailing economic conditions and the still poorly developed structures for the rule of law require the continuation of a significant international presence in Kosovo. Switzerland is determined to pursue its

commitment side by side with other members of the international community.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Albania.

Mr. Nesho (Albania): Madam President, at the outset, on behalf of my Government, allow me to welcome the Foreign Minister of Denmark, Mr. Per Stig Møller, who has been presiding over the Council at this very important meeting on the future of our region. Let me also express my delegation's appreciation for the realistic, comprehensive and substantive report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2005/335). We also welcome at this important meeting the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, and we thank him for his comprehensive briefing on the latest developments in Kosovo. On behalf of my Government, I would like to commend and thank Mr. Jessen-Petersen for his leadership and foresight at the head of UNMIK and for his active diplomacy in promoting a fruitful partnership of Kosovo's institutions with the various regional and international stakeholders. Once again, I would like to assure him of Albania's full support.

We commend the Contact Group on Kosovo for its active role, strongly believing that it will continue and will have a noteworthy political and diplomatic impact on that issue. We share the opinion that the frequent contacts of this Group with the actors within Kosovo, as well as its cooperation with the Security Council, will significantly help the political process to determine Kosovo's final status.

While praising the peaceful and voluntary surrender of Mr. Ramush Haradinaj to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), we agree that the momentum of transition to the new Government, led by Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi, is another clear sign of the growing maturity and effectiveness of the political class and institutions in Kosovo. These three months, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, have demonstrated the determination of the new Government of Mr. Kosumi and the leadership of President Rugova to maintain the momentum on standards implementation.

The year 2005 is a crucial and significant one for Kosovo and the Balkans. As we all agree, the time has come for important and substantial progress in determining Kosovo's political status. The status quo is neither desirable nor useful. We strongly believe that this process will help Kosovo's rapid progress, economy and prosperity, will generate security and stability and will promote the advancement of the whole region, in line with the European countries.

The process of regular reviews of the progress on standards now indicates significant momentum. We fully share the Secretary-General's recommendation to initiate a comprehensive review this summer, bearing in mind, as he notes, the progress on the eight standards and the tireless efforts made thus far by Kosovo's Provisional Institutions. All this will naturally lead to a process of determining Kosovo's status.

We reaffirm our understanding that the implementation of the standards is a complex and ongoing process that will lead towards a democratic, stable and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, with democratic institutions and effective guarantees for the protection of minorities and of the cultural and religious heritage. Implementation of standards is and will remain the central focus of the efforts of all the people of Kosovo to live in dignity and move forward towards Euro-Atlantic integration. I think it is worth recalling what Ambassador Kai Eide noted in his comprehensive report (S/2004/932, annex I, enclosure) of one year ago: we are moving to a "standards with status" approach, which in our opinion remains realistic and adequate.

We strongly believe that a multi-ethnic and democratic society in Kosovo remains the ultimate goal. For that purpose, the continued commitment of Kosovo institutions to decentralization, minority issues, good governance and the economy remains a priority.

Decentralization is one of the key issues and is beneficial to all citizens of Kosovo. In particular, it will advance the rights of minorities, and it will also strengthen local initiatives and help the economic, social and cultural development of all communities. We hold the view that decentralization should occur in parallel with the shaping and the strengthening of the central Government structures, that the autonomy of local authorities should not escape or harm the vertical line of power, that local structures must remain accountable to Pristina and that parallel structures must be integrated into Kosovo's structure or dismantled.

Above all, decentralization should avoid cantonization, which would impede the normal functioning of a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo.

The issue of minorities, which is a basic element of a multi-ethnic society, demands the engagement of all relevant actors in Kosovo: governmental institutions and civil society, as well as the Serb and other minorities. We commend the real progress and positive steps already achieved, but we encourage further attention and harder work in that area and further efforts to revitalize the return process, expand the inter-community dialogue and respect minority rights.

Meeting those objectives requires the continuous commitment of the Kosovo leadership, as well as goodwill and participatory efforts on the part of the Serb and other ethnic communities. The Serb minority's self-exclusion and its non-participation in the Assembly and other institutions only impede progress on standards. The Serb minority is part of Kosovo society, and as such, it has both rights and obligations. It should offer constructive engagement and end its isolation.

Good governance is a priority objective for the governing institutions of Kosovo. Establishment of the rule of law, the creation of an independent judiciary and a public administration and respect for private property are indispensable in that regard.

Meeting those standards requires that more competences and responsibilities be transferred to the local authorities and that privatization be accelerated. That process would have a positive impact on economic development and on the climate for foreign investment in Kosovo. Given its current political status, Kosovo remains a long way from direct foreign investment and lacks eligibility for benefiting from International Monetary Fund and World Bank programmes and assistance, which would have a direct impact on the development of a stable and efficient economy.

The Albanian Government thinks that the process of discussing and defining the status of Kosovo has to take into consideration some basic elements that will undoubtedly lead to a long-term solution with a positive impact on stability, security and the Euro-Atlantic integration of the region. We share the broadly held view that the basic principles that have already been identified and recognized can guide the settlement of this issue.

In that context, we reaffirm that respect for the democratically expressed free will of all people of Kosovo with respect to their future, together with guarantees for the respect and the protection of minority rights, including guarantees for the protection of their inherited cultural and religious values, remains crucial for a just and stable solution.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Covic, President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

Mr. Covic (Serbia and Montenegro) (*spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to participate in the discussion. I just wish to address some of the points I have heard.

It was said that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) can motivate the Albanians to engage in the decentralization process once the Special Representative convinces them that Kosovo will not be partitioned. We believe that is true. However, in that same way we can motivate the Serbs to participate in the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government by convincing them that Kosovo and Metohija will not become independent. But how are we to do that when, on a daily basis, those Institutions propose independence as a solution? We have to ask ourselves why Serbs would enter institutions committed to the independence of Kosovo and Metohija. Thus, I call on officials of UNMIK and the international community to convince the Serbs that Kosovo and Metohija will not become independent and that the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Serbia and Montenegro will be respected. That way, Kosovo Serbs can be persuaded to participate in the institutions of Kosovo and Metohija.

I wish to remind the Council that Kosovo Serbs participated in those institutions after the 2001 elections. They participated in 2002 and 2003, and through March 2004. The same old story went on again and again, and I had an opportunity to hear it. We were told to persuade them to enter the Provisional Institutions. We tried to do that. What happened in the end? The events of 17 March 2004 took place. And the consequences of the ethnic cleansing have not been remedied to date. Of the 4,500 persons who were internally displaced following 17 March, 1,600 have

not yet returned to their homes. I have no intention of telling the Council nice stories with happy endings. I only wish to be realistic, whether the Council likes it or not. That is why I think the statement of the United Kingdom was incorrect and unfair. Please, do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

With respect to the freedom of movement, the real test of whether there is freedom of movement comes when those people go back to their schools. What kind of freedom of movement is there when children need military escorts to go to school? Of course, we are grateful for everything UNMIK and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) have done. I would not like my statement to lead to the removal of the KFOR presence, because there is no freedom of movement. We should all commit ourselves to solving this problem. We generally agree that the future status of Kosovo and Metohija can influence regional stability and trade, but a one-sided solution to the problem of Kosovo and Metohija would be a very poor compromise. That is a topic for discussion between Belgrade and Pristina. A compromise on the future status of Kosovo and Metohija would create the conditions for dialogue and free trade in the region and would be accepted by our neighbours as well.

Of course, finding a peaceful, comprehensive and lasting solution takes time. Our discussion today concerning the difficulties of implementing the standards clearly indicates that it is not possible to solve the issue of the status of Kosovo and Metohija in an accelerated fashion.

I should also like to draw attention to incorrect and untrue views asserting that for some internally displaced persons, the fear of a lack of economic opportunities, not the fear of the lack of security, is the factor discouraging return.

I therefore ask: Why should a person return to his house, farm or apartment unless he can be assured of surviving? If there are economic reasons preventing the return of Serbs, they are of secondary importance and easily solved. I must stress, however, that we cannot divert our attention from UNMIK's lack of activity on the main issue. We will be very constructive in our approach, but must not be expected to hide our heads in the sand.

The President: I shall now give the floor to Mr. Jessen-Petersen to respond to the comments.

Mr. Jessen-Petersen: Allow me first to thank the members of the Security Council for their observations and their very strong statements of support for the ongoing process in Kosovo and in the region.

I also would like to express my appreciation for the statements expressing support for the Secretary-General's recommendations to launch the comprehensive review this summer. I fully agree with those many statements underlining that such a review must indeed be comprehensive, thorough and objective, and I can only say here that, obviously, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) will support that exercise so that we can achieve the objective, which is one we all share.

I would also like to welcome the many statements that rightly have underlined that the situation in Kosovo is a very complex one. It is not a situation that can described in black and white; it is full of nuances. That is exactly why the Secretary-General's report and, I would underline, my own technical assessment try to present what one member of the Council referred to as a mixed picture.

But I want to assure the Security Council that I know that the leaders of Kosovo have heard their statements today loud and clear. They have heard, first, that they need to make further demonstrable progress in order to move forward. They have heard, secondly, that they need to redouble and intensify their efforts to address, in particular, the shortcomings that we all recognize and that I also referred to in my opening remarks, notably in the areas of return and freedom of movement, and overall to improve the conditions and the protection of minorities. Thirdly, I can assure the Council that the leaders in Kosovo have heard, loud and clear, that the outcome of the comprehensive review is not a foregone conclusion. I assure the Council because I know that, for the leaders and citizens of Kosovo, the implementation of standards is not only a requirement for moving forward on the process leading us into status discussions. It is much more; above all, for the political parties and citizens of Kosovo, standards implementation is, equally and maybe even more importantly, a matter of building up a European society that is democratic and multi-ethnic and where the minorities are protected and the religious and cultural sites of importance to the minorities are preserved and protected.

I would, with your permission, Sir, say a few words in response to the first and second statements of my friend Mr. Covic. I do feel that the statements may not always have reflected the fact that we are dealing with a very complex situation in which there are no blacks and whites. I thought it might be helpful if I were to add a couple of points, so that maybe we can get more than one side on some of the important issues. Out of respect for the Council's time, however, let me just cite three or four examples.

First of all, Mr. Covic mentioned as an example of freedom of movement being respected on the Kosovo Serb side that one Albanian Resident, a judge in northern Mitrovica, goes to work every day. I think that is good. Let me just say here — and the statistics are clear — that 10 per cent of all public servants are minorities, and the large majority of those are Kosovo Serbs. The large majority of those minority public servants move to work every day.

Secondly, Mr. Covic expressed concern over the quality of democracy in a place where the minority — the Kosovo Serbs — risks being outvoted. I would say that I find that the most important aspect of democracy is indeed that one participates, exercises the rights of a democracy and votes. I think we should worry about voting before we start worrying about being outvoted. Furthermore, as I have discussed many times with Belgrade, I still regret that the Kosovo Serbs did not participate in the elections, because if they had participated at the level they did during the last elections, Kosovo Serbs would today have the second largest political party in Kosovo, and the risk of being outvoted would not have been there.

Thirdly, on the International Telecommunication Union, I know this is a matter that was raised here in the Council in February. Let me just say very briefly that UNMIK has acted, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and on the basis of absolutely unambiguous advice from the Legal Adviser of the Secretary-General, to seek an independent code for Kosovo on an interim basis. We are doing that for purely economic purposes. The very weak economy of Kosovo loses approximately €50 million on an annual basis because all the profits of telephone communications today go to quarters outside Kosovo.

The fourth point I want to make is on the Kosovo Forum. I want to reassure Mr. Covic and the members of the Council that the moment that the Kosovo Serbs are encouraged to take their seats in the democratic institutions, they will, of course, be invited to join the Forum, but we cannot invite them into the Forum as along as they are not members of the Assembly, because we have invited the political parties represented in the Assembly.

I also want to make the very evident point that, when it comes to preparing for status discussions, that is the responsibility of the institutions in Kosovo. It is not the responsibility of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. My mandate is clear. My mandate is to facilitate the process, but status preparations must be the exclusive responsibilities of the authorities and the political parties in Kosovo, and will indeed be so.

Finally, Mr. Covic said that there had been no response to the invitations for dialogue from President Tadic and Prime Minister Kostunica. As I said in my opening statement, I very much welcome those invitations. Mr. Covic's statement is not entirely correct. The invitation from President Tadic was a public one and Mr. Rugova has publicly confirmed that he is looking forward to meeting him. The Prime Minister wrote the letter of invitation eventually, inviting Prime Minister Kosumi. Prime Minister Kosumi responded in a letter welcoming the dialogue and I believe that they will meet shortly.

Let me conclude by thanking you, Sir, for presiding over this Council meeting, which I believe will go down in history as a very important one that will move forward the process in the western Balkans, in Kosovo in particular; that will move the region and Kosovo closer towards normalization and stabilization; and that will allow all the States in the region, and Kosovo too, to focus all their efforts on what must be the goal of everybody in the region: European integration.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.